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Intellectual History and the Causes of the French Revolution

Abstract

From the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, historians, politicians, and even the interested public believed radical ideas to be at the bottom of this upheaval. Upstaged by social explanations, particularly in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, intellectual accounts have regained prominence, as recent scholarship has reiterated that ideas mattered. But what ideas? This essay focuses on those ideas that became evident at and around the outbreak of the revolution in 1788–89. For this period, a new wave of scholarship emphasizes not the idea of equality but rather historic rights and patriotism. In these accounts, Enlightenment notions of natural law provided the central justification for radicalizing the revolution as the decade proceeded. Beyond patriotism and rights, this essay also examines other competing discourses, especially those that challenged the church.

Many histories of the French Revolution, beginning with those written in the era itself, assumed, almost axiomatically, that the ideas of the philosophes had caused the "coming" of the event.[1] As social and other historians undermined that theory, intellectual historians moved in new directions, particularly toward the social history of ideas. Most visibly, in the 1960s, Robert Darnton and François Furet showed how subversive (even if not actually revolutionary) ideas had seeped into political culture through pornography and porous state borders.[2] Jürgen Habermas enlarged this vision by arguing that a "public sphere" had emerged in France that allowed subversive ideas and practices in various milieus, such as Freemasonry, the growing periodical press, and learned societies.[3] Still, few scholars claimed a direct link between these ideas and revolution.

Nonetheless, scholarly interest in ideas radically sharpened after the publication of François Furet's *Penser la revolution française* in 1978, which opened up a new approach to intellectual history.[4] The first half of the book lambasted the Marxist explanation for the Revolution, which Furet labeled a "catechism" with class struggle at its absolute, immutable center. The twentieth-century Marxists who advocated this view saw themselves as the obvious heirs to the founding of

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the French republic, but Furet dismissed the Marxist interpretation as sheer fabrication.

Having pushed aside class conflict as the Revolution's central dynamic, Furet succinctly posited his own theory that even before 1789 the monarchy was toothless. Into that power vacuum, sailed Rousseau's *Social Contract*, a tract so powerful that its message eclipsed other ideologies and installed a potent logic—the absolute dominance of popular sovereignty. Yet, activating popular sovereignty required an advocate, an individual who could claim to embody the people's will. Robespierre filled this role admirably, but he also created the potential for individual tyranny far more potent than that of a king whose authority was inherent in his body but surely did not represent the France of millions of people. From this fatal flaw eventually followed the Committee of Public Safety and the Terror. Furet's theory was novel: by reducing the Revolution to the Terror, and blaming all of it on the logic of popular sovereignty derived from Rousseau, he tied the philosophe directly to the Revolution. Furet's approach, drawn sharply to make a criticism of the Revolution as well as a scholarly point, was more specific than those that more generally connected the Enlightenment to the Revolution.

Although Furet's interpretation did much to supplant Marxist and more traditional intellectual interpretations, it was criticized by scholars who contended that Rousseau's fame had sprung far more from his sentimental writings than from the *Social Contract*. More recently, however, some scholars have resuscitated Rousseau's influence.[5] Nonetheless, Furet provided no explanation for the revolutionaries' acceptance of Rousseauian ideas other than the political vacuum and the rigorous logic springing from Rousseau's belief that equality had no limits. How could these specific ideas hijack the mindset of a population?

Keith Baker articulated a parallel but different explanation for the acceptance of revolutionary ideology.[6] He put forth the abstract concept that every individual lives in an environment with discourses—ideational resources—that compete for attention. Facing these choices, people rather unconsciously pick and assemble notions that provide concrete solutions to material problems. In 1789, as governmental problems abounded, the elite—particularly dissatisfied elites—adopted three somewhat disparate discourses to frame their response. Baker labeled these three languages justice (opposition to despotism), reason (opposition to political views accepted because of their antiquity), and will (the right to implement enlightened concepts). The discourse of will approximated Furet's notion of the role of equality and popular sovereignty. Yet Baker departed from Furet's understanding of the way that ideology worked, adopting a more complex explanation for the creation of revolutionary ideology that included both chance and an alignment with material conditions. Nonetheless, Furet and Baker generally agreed on the important role of ideas or, more precisely, cultural change as a logic for revolution.[7]

Continued work by Keith Baker, now collaborating with Dan Edelstein, remains highly visible, thanks in part to the impressive development of Stanford's Digital Archive.[8] The architecture of the website springs from Edelstein's and Baker's priorities, which reflect their own understanding of the Revolution's origins. Now, with a twenty-first century digital toolbox, Baker, Edelstein, and others at Stanford oversee technologists who are able to create algorithms that help scholars discover word associations, the building blocks for

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political discourse, on a far grander scale than what was possible even a few years ago. Still more important in extending their view of the power of ideas has been their new book *Scripting Revolution*, whose introduction confidently asserts that a revolution only assumes that form after being named a revolution. In practice, this theory implies that the French Revolution did not actually begin after the elections and the seizure of the Bastille in 1789 but instead only commenced later that year when Louis-Marie Prudhomme's periodical *Révolutions de Paris* published a contemporary history of the events that labeled them revolutionary. Although Baker's essay on the eighteenth-century use of the term "revolution" indicated the necessity of naming or "scripting," he asserted this stronger point after Pierre Rétat pointed out Prudhomme's essay. But what Rétat had begun in a fairly obscure article (that Baker carefully acknowledged and credited), Baker emphatically embraced and applied to all subsequent revolutions. In short, events called for the label; then, the label "revolution" defined subsequent actions.[9]

Despite the significant achievements of Furet and Baker in reconceptualizing the intellectual origins of the Revolution, a new paradigm—classical republicanism—has exerted significant influence since 2000, at least in the English-speaking wing of the field. Baker would hardly contest this, it seems to me, since the convergence between the newer notion and his own arguments is considerable. In fact, he and his former student Johnson Kent Wright have done much to introduce this perspective to explain the French Revolution.[10] What neither they nor anyone else has provided is a standard definition of classical republicanism. For the purposes of this essay, one might assert that the essence of the term lies in the Greek and Roman defense of virtue and personal liberty against an empire. In the eighteenth century, according to this view, resistance fell to the nobility, which, motivated by honor, defended a populace that was itself only motivated by interest and largely incapable of taking up this necessary battle.

The ascendance of classical republicanism in accounts of the events of 1788–89 has tended to relegate the emphasis on natural rights (that Baker links to the language of "will") to the subsequent radicalization of the Revolution. But this relationship was never quite settled, as Rousseau's *Social Contract* advocated both republicanism and natural rights. Furthermore, advocates of classical republicanism also had their eye on equality, although they conceived of it more as the ennobling of all rather than leveling. In short, the equality born of natural law was minimized in 1788–89. Equality had proved difficult to accommodate consistently, much less realize, in the early part of revolutionary struggle driven by classical republicanism.[11]

Worth noting as an aside is the prescience of two of the canonical works from a previous generation of scholars. Peter Gay clearly recognized the philosophes' interest in the ancients but focused on their views that castigated religion, while Robert R. Palmer's "intermediate bodies" are congruent with the resistance of elites, though clearly he imagined a social elite wider than the nobility of classical republicanism.[12]

Evidence for how broad has been the reach of classical republicanism as an explanation for revolution are two distinguished studies in the related fields of fiscal policy and the economy. John Shovlin's book, *The Political Economy of Virtue* details the debates beginning in the 1740s between those who favored

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"virtuous" small producers over the wealthier, parasitic echelons of society.[13] His study depicts a battle between producers on one side and financiers and the comfortable on the other. Contemporaries believed that luxury and profit were derived from the exploitation of honest workers. Shovlin follows this division through the decades of the eighteenth century; though positions evolved, the rich and the oppressed remained opposed. To be sure, the author sometimes resorts to fancy footwork, as some entrepreneurial activities dropped by the rich and adopted by the poor apparently change from despicable to honored simply by virtue of who performed the work. He praises profit well earned by the hands of the poor and attacks that when the rich become the recipients.

During the revolutionary crisis, Shovlin argues, the advocates for the peasantry and the workers seized the upper hand. Dealing with the deficit, their representatives came to believe that piecemeal reforms would not do and the problem at bottom was an excess of luxury. At the center of this attack was Mirabeau, who argued that "speculation creates a false wealth which undermines real sources of riches in agriculture and in commerce."[14] Further, Shovlin states that patriotism had influenced and shaped how ordinary citizens understood political economy. Although the author seldom acknowledges the link between patriotism and classical republicanism, the rhetoric he uncovers fits neatly with the broader theory of classical republicanism.[15]

In his valuable work *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth Century France*, Michael Kwass analyzes the resistance to royal taxation that boiled over in the Old Regime and into the Revolution and directly points out the immediate relevance of classical republicanism to the debate. Kwass notes that the contemporary meaning of classical republicanism included a king and "representative bodies" that coexisted in a milieu where a "vigilant" mistrust of authority and hostility to finance were augmented by the embrace of an authentic rustic existence in which virtue reigned. Watchfulness was necessary, even though somewhat powerless against the encroachment of the sovereign. But Kwass believes that Mireabeau, in the long term struggle of this scenario, articulated in 1750–51 the possibility of coexistence. Morally, the king was obliged toward restraint. Royal taxation had produced crises; only an end to arbitrary rule and its replacement could be successful.[16]

Decades later, according to Kwass, Jacques Necker mobilized a similar rhetoric. Brought into government to address the deficit, Necker appealed to patriotism rather than duty to the king, whom he advised to encourage public involvement. As Kwass notes: "By publicizing the working of the state . . . both patriotism and public opinion would emerge to guide the nation to reform, stability, and fiscal strength."[17] Such remarks were more than just a rhetorical similarity to classical republicanism, as shown by a popular engraving, which linked the minister and his fiscal plan to antiquity. Hallmarks of this classical allusion are the cupids who crowned Necker and his policies with garlands. Central to the piece is a monument labeled as a pyramid, whose lettering indicated that taxes linked to the king were to be eliminated, replaced by charity, equity, and abundance.[18]

Although classical republican ideals were thus supposed to inhabit the economy and fiscal policy, they were, compared to the rhetoric of the political sphere, limited at best. Jay M. Smith's provocative *Nobility Reimagined* asserts that the revolutionaries desired but failed to construct a republic based on the

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antique values of honor and virtue. The study describes the nobles' hostility to Louis XIV's absolutism and their desire to base society on patriotism and political virtue. As Smith notes, the French were familiar with ancient authors such as Livy, Tacitus, and Plutarch and "the 'civic humanism' idiom that served as an important vehicle for transmitting the values of the ancient republics to the early modern Atlantic world."[19] The embrace of antiquity fueled the pride of nobles but also reminded them of family heritage and their disproportionate political and economic power. This cauldron yielded a compensatory embrace of virtue.

According to Smith, an increased interest in adding equality to the mix of values emerged at mid-century. In particular, commerce, premised on equality in moral and physical goods, was widely considered valuable. The publication in 1756 of Gabriel-François Coyer's *La Noblesse commerçante*, which elevated the dignity of the merchant's profession, furthered change. The contemporary Pierre Jaubert claimed even more as he asserted that "virtue, valor, zeal for the *patrie*, probity, ability, talent, experience, scorn for dangers, the honor of becoming a martyr for one's *patrie* . . . in short, personal merit, are always hereditary in families."[20] Smith claimed that such attributes were intended to incorporate commoners into the elite. Antique republicanism was socially expansive. In fact, by the 1760 s, the French had turned to ennobling the nation.

Despite all of these signs of inclusivity, Smith also indicates that many nobles were uneasy with this change. With the Revolution opening the door to unimaginable equality, the nobles asserted their difference, particularly by refusing to double the number of commoner representatives to the Third Estate. This action gave rise to a bitter struggle that animated the Revolution. Despite the ultimate demolition of the ideal of classical republicanism in revolutionary France, the passions ignited in 1788–89 reveal its importance to contemporaries and its relevance to history.

Having added classical republicanism to the toolbox of analysis, historians still need to consider the impact of other ideas in the Revolution. Here *Nobility Reimagined* is useful. Smith argues that the fissure created by the debate over the role and definition of the nobility engineered a giant and divisive turn in the future of France well beyond the revolutionary decade. Nonetheless, he also insists that this struggle was not inevitable:

> The monarch's multiple foreign policy failures, the subsistence crises of 1788–89, the credit crunch of the 1780s, and the institutional paralysis that undermined all royal efforts at reform would also need to be integrated into any comprehensive analysis of the causes of the Old Regime's collapse in 1789.[21]

Agreeing with Kwass, Smith argues that in the end, these events and discourses cannot be "easily separated."[22] Thus, politics and circumstances led to a radical division in which the nobility and the king ended up as the opponents of republican morality. To judge by the work of Shovlin, Kwass, and Smith, the central role of ideas in the complex crises of the late 1780 s seems well established. These scholars have begun to connect classical republicanism to the actions taken during this key historical conjuncture.

Ushered by classical republicanism into a smaller space in the intellectual ferment, the role of natural law requires reevaluation. Scholars who focus on

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classical republicanism in the origins of the Revolution sometimes imply through offhand remarks that natural law exerted a major impact as the Revolution continued. More work needs to be done to chart natural law and connect it to revolutionary events. Historians' use of these two separate logics undermines the fundamental coherence of revolutionary thinking and perhaps that of the Enlightenment itself. Whereas classical republicanism is premised on the historic resistance to central control, natural law focuses on human equality, yielding a contradiction—perhaps even a useful one—that still resonates throughout modern politics.

Largely outside the political maelstrom, other ideas flourished. Particularly impressive is the study by Darrin McMahon on the "counter enlightenment," a group that absorbed some progressive notions. [23] Even more astonishing—as it certainly would have been to Voltaire—has been the work on the Catholic enlightenment. Important new books by Jeffrey Burson and Ulrich Lehner have revivified an effort whose roots lie in R. R. Palmer's *Catholics and Unbelievers*, which illuminated the balance of tradition and change.[24] Also relevant in this vein are Alan Kors's studies of the Catholic Church. In his earliest work on Baron d'Holbach, Kors focused on the loneliness of atheists. More recently, he produced two important books that unequivocally revealed that notions of atheism circulated far more widely than even he earlier imagined. In seeking to reject atheism, the Church amplified the reach of what it sought to repress.[25] A new book by Anton Matysin on scepticism and doubt takes a similar tack.[26] Nonetheless, John Robertson's persuasive *The Case for the Enlightenment* concludes that the Enlightenment, linked as it was to critiquing religion, was fundamentally reformist.[27] Nevertheless, none of these books on religious doubt attempt to relate their subjects directly to the upheaval in 1789.

None of these recent approaches seems to have raised the importance of intellectuals to quite the level achieved in France's sister rebellion in North America. Sophia Rosenfeld has chronicled how Tom Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*, highlighting the acuity and value of the thinking of the common man, galvanized public opinion and incited the North American Revolution. Scholars, including Rosenfeld herself, have found no similar impact on the French Revolution. In fact, counterrevolutionaries actually marshaled the notion of common sense to sway the people against the uprising. The complexity and abstractness of many revolutionary plans created an opportunity for reactionaries to argue that common sense did not embrace, or in fact even respect, revolutionary goals.[28]

Nonetheless, scholars, including Jay Smith, have noted the pamphlet war preceding 1788–89, in which Sieyès's *What Is the Third Estate?* was most visible.[29] William Sewell's work on Sieyès and Kenneth Margerison's on pamphlets more generally provide additional evidence for the importance of these texts.[30] Doubtless, these publications could prove to be the most promising place to link the various prerevolutionary languages to the revolutionary plans enacted in Versailles, Paris, and throughout the country, though little evidence exists that the rural population knew much of this exchange among propagandists. Nonetheless, this explosion of print may provide fertile ground to examine the role of ideas.

Entering the crowded arena regarding the intellectual origins of the French Revolution has been Jonathan Israel, who approaches the role of ideas by

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postulating a *direct* connection between individual Enlightenment thinkers and specific views that would compete in the Revolution. In this way, Israel is rehabilitating the older approach that focuses not on languages or presuppositions but on on individuals and the power of ideas. Although his work (five books totaling four thousand pages published from 2001 to 2014) could be useful, its combativeness, the overemphases of its argument, and its length all undercut that potential contribution. In fact, his corpus has inspired the most acrimonious debate on the intellectual history of the Revolution in recent years. Largely because of the prominence of this debate, Israel's work has somewhat obscured the previous decades of more sober, though still contentious scholarship. For this reason, both its arguments and the reactions it has provoked thus require a brief review.[31]

To pursue the connection between ideas and the Revolution, Israel sorted the philosophes into two camps. Beginning in the seventeenth century with Spinoza, whose theory denied the spiritual and insisted on atheism, Israel focuses on Spinoza's belief in "monism," which held that only one substance (material not spiritual) made up the universe. The philosopher opposed "deists" and others—very prominently Rousseau—who posited a creator who fashioned the universe. From this sharp division, Israel finds two separate logics. The deists, believing in God, held that little could be done to improve on his perfection; monists, holding all matter to be equal, averred that everyone could participate in making life better. In this analysis, the atheists become the source of the moderate, incremental revolution, while the religious appear as political fanatics and authors of the Terror.

Israel presents his thesis forcibly, and the rebuttals have shown similar intensity. Although Furet attacked the Marxists and offended others by insisting that the Jacobin dictatorship was the logical end of the Revolution, even that of 1789, Israel undertakes a far larger, even compulsive effort to organize the Revolution around his Manichaean notion and refute other interpretations.

A storm of criticism greeted Israel's work.[32] Kent Wright, Carolina Armenteros, Keith Baker, and Harvey Chisick found much to criticize and little to praise in the book. Israel seemingly found it impossible to acknowledge any of their critiques, which he completely rejected. For an example, consider the interchange between Baker and Israel. As author of the iconic biography of Condorcet, Baker had noted that that philosophe did not even include Spinoza in his narrative of human progress. Such a challenge to Israel's linkages led the latter to remark condescendingly that this could "conceivably" be right, but nonetheless, the two philosophes still strongly shared goals.[33]

Possibly, Israel's resistance to criticism accounts for even more critical reviews that followed, by highly distinguished scholars Lynn Hunt, Jeremy Popkin, and David Bell.[34] In his review, Bell remarked that "Israel, in some remarkably cavalier pages, treats . . . popular actions almost with annoyance. . . . He takes no interest in the common people's culture." Israel's unwillingness to engage with the work of other scholars piqued Lynn Hunt who derided his one-sided accounts: "Israel's palette is too black and white for . . . subtleties. He is always right, and so are his heroes."[35]

Despite all its faults, Israel's work does suggest the value in plumbing the ideas of individual intellectual predecessors of the French Revolution. Though few will follow his precise path, a focus on the use of ideas, from the Greeks to

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the physiocrats, could help illuminate the intellectual history of the revolutionary maelstrom. With this narrower focus, scholars just might be able to supplement the interplay of discourses and embedded presuppositions by seeing ideas at work among intellectuals.

Endnotes

The author wishes to thank Jane Turner Censer and Gary Kates for their advice and assistance. Address correspondence to Jack R. Censer, jcenser@gmu.edu.

1. See, for example, Edmund Burke's early assertions in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790; rept. ed., Garden City, NY, 1961), first published in 1790.

2. Over the last several decades, Robert Darnton and François Furet have published numerous works in this area. See especially, Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-revolutionary France* (New York, 1995); and François Furet et al., *Livre et société dans la France du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1965–70), 2 vols.

3. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Boston, MA, 1993). See also Ran Halévi, *Les Loges maçonniques dans la France d'Ancien Régime: Aux origins de la sociabilité démocratique* (Paris, 1984).

4. François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (New York, 1981).

5. See for example, Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 1986); and more recently, Dan Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, & the French Revolution* (Chicago, 2010). See below for a discussion of Jonathan Israel's work.

6. Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990).

7. For an even more poignant criticism of the role of ideas, consult Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, NJ, 1991), 67–91. Chartier argues that "books" do not make revolutions; rather it is the cultural act of reading that possesses power.

8. The website can be found at: https://frda.stanford.edu.

9. Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, eds., *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolution* (Stanford, CA, 2015). See Rétat's article, "Forme et discours d'un journal Révolutionnaire: Les *Révolutions de Paris* en 1789," in Claude Labrosse, Pierre Rétat, and Henri Duranton, *L'Instrument périodique: La function de la presse au XVIIIe siècle* (Lyon, France, 1985), 139–66. One can see Baker's use of the article in *Scripting Revolution*, 96–97. Baker was even more emphatic on this point in a discussion at a conference at Haifa University in 1989.

10. Keith Michael Baker, "A Script for a French Revolution: The Political Consciousness of the Abbé Mably," in *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990); and Johnson Kent Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford, CA, 1997). See also Rachel Hammersley, *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth-Century France: Between the Ancients and the Moderns* (Manchester, England, 2010). For more on the mixture of natural law and the right to resist overweening monarchs in the Atlantic world, consult Jack R. Censer, *Debating Modern Revolution: The Evolution of Revolutionary Ideas* (London, 2016), 7–52.

11. Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right*.

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12. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1967, 1969); and R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1959, 1964).

13. John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 2006). Marisa Linton, *The Politics of Virtue in Enlightenment France* (New York, 2001); Andrew Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (Ithaca, NY, 2008).

14. Shovlin, *The Political Economy*, 171.

15. Henry C. Clark, *Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old Regime France* (Lanham, MD, 2007) shows how resistance and accommodation limited at first the liberty of both producers and polity. However, it must be said that such values triumphed as the nineteenth century rolled along. In fact, James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2001) argues persuasively that already in the Directory (1795–99), both liberal economy and politics had revived, if only briefly before dominating in a later period.

16. Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge, 2000), 234–38.

17. Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*, 251.

18. Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*, 245.

19. Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY, 2005), 32.

20. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 133.

21. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 265.

22. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 266.

23. Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York, 2001).

24. Jeffrey D. Burson, *The Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment: Jean-Martin de Prades and Ideological Polarization in Eighteenth-Century France* (South Bend, IN, 2010); Ulrich L. Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement* (New York, 2016); and R. R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in 18th Century France* (Princeton, NJ, 1939).

25. Alan Charles Kors, *D'Holbach's Coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris* (Princeton, 1976); *Epicureans and Atheists in France, 1650–1729* (Cambridge, 2016); and *Naturalism and Unbelief in France, 1650–1729* (Cambridge, 2016).

26. Anton M. Matysin, *The Specter of Skepticism in the Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD, 2016).

27. John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge, 2005). In fact, in his *The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2015), 116, Robertson goes farther to note that "the Revolution was the antithesis of Enlightenment."

28. Sophia Rosenfeld, *Common Sense: A Political History* (Cambridge, MA, 2011).

29. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 255–57. Of course, Peter Gay found group solidarity in the eighteenth-century philosophes in his *The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment* (New York, 1964).

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30. William H. Sewell, Jr., *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyes and What Is the Third Estate?* (Durham, NC, 1994); and Kenneth Margerison, *Pamphlets & Public Opinion: The Campaign for a Union of Orders in the Early French Revolution* (West Lafayette, IN, 1998).

31. Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001); *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford, 2006); *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton, 2010); *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (Oxford, 2011); and *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre* (Princeton, 2014).

32. *H-France Forum* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2014).

33. *H-France Forum* 9, no. 1, 80.

34. This paragraph is based on the following reviews and responses: David A. Bell, "A Very Different French Revolution," *New York Review of Books* (July 10, 2014); Jonathan Israel, "The French Revolution: An Exchange," *New York Review of Books*, October 10, 2014; Lynn Hunt, "Louis XVI Wasn't Killed by Ideas," *New Republic*, June 27, 2014; Jonathan Israel and Lynn Hunt, "Was Louis XVI Overthrown by Ideas?" *New Republic*, July 31, 2014; Jeremy D. Popkin, "Review of Jonathan Israel, Revolutionary Ideas," *H-France Review* 15, no. 66 (May 2015); Jonathan Israel, "Response to Jeremy Popkin's Review, *H-France Review* 15, no. 67 (May 2015).

35. Bell, "A Very Different French Revolution," 2; Hunt, "Louis XVI," 8.

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